United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1110
31 March 1992

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council votes to impose mandatory sanctions against Libya, including an air and arms embargo, effective as of 15 April; vote is ten in favour, none against, with China, Cape Verde, India, Morocco and Zimbabwe abstaining.

+ Preparatory Committee of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development approves four chapters of "Agenda 21"; reschedules Rio Conference for 3 to 14 June.

+ In letter to Security Council President, Somali Chargé d'affaires says cease-fire will be "short-lived" unless cause of conflict is removed; urges recognition of "the multitude of factions and clans" by international community in efforts to reunite Somalia.

+ Speakers in Information Committee stress importance of free, pluralistic and independent press.

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The Security Council has decided to impose mandatory sanctions against Libya, including an air and arms embargo, effective as of 15 April. The Council took that action by adopting resolution 748 (1992) by a recorded vote of ten in favour, none against and five abstentions (China, Cape Verde, India, Morocco and Zimbabwe).

The action by the Council comes in response to Libya's failure to provide full and effective response to earlier requests by the Council for cooperation in establishing the responsibility for the destruction of Pan Am flight 103 and UTA flight 772.

By its resolution, the Council has decided that all Member States, including non-members and all international organizations, should deny permission to any aircraft to take off from, land in or overfly their territory if it was going to or coming from the territory of Libya, unless the

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particular flight had been approved for significant humanitarian needs. It also prohibits the supply of any aircraft or aircraft components to Libya, as well as engineering and maintenance servicing of Libyan aircraft.

The embargo also includes any provision to Libya of arms and related material of all types, including the sale or transfer of weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment.

The resolution further calls on States to significantly reduce the number and the level of staff at Libyan diplomatic missions and consular posts and to deny entry to or expel Libyan nationals accused of being involved in terrorist activities.

The Council decided to establish a Committee to examine reports on the work done to implement the embargo and to seek information from States to that effect. The Committee is also consider any application by States for the approval of flights on grounds of significant humanitarian needs.

The Council requested all member States to report to the Secretary-General by 15 May on the measures instituted by them to meet their obligations under today's resolution.

Asked by the press following the meeting whether the "moral weight" of the resolution had been diminished by the fact that one third of the Council had abstained in the vote, Council President Diego Arria (Venezuela) replied that the Council shared common ground in its stand against terrorism, as reflected in January's unanimous resolution 731. "There are different perspectives and different interests with regard to the treatment and the consideration of this matter and that was reflected in the vote", he said.

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The Preparatory Committee of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) has recommended to the General Assembly that the dates of the Conference be changed from 1 to 12 June to 3 to 14 June. The move is being recommended in consideration of the Muslim Feast of Ed-Al-Ah, which will start around 10 June. Ozker Akad, the representative of Turkey speaking on behalf of the Islamic Conference, said the decision would facilitate greater participation in the Rio Conference thus contributing to its success.

Meanwhile, the Preparatory Committee has approved four chapters of "Agenda 21", one of the documents scheduled for adoption by the Conference, which consists of a comprehensive plan of action extending into the twenty-first century, covering major areas affecting the relationship between the environment and the economy. The chapters adopted, which still contain bracketed texts that indicate lack of agreement, particularly concerning financial resources, deal with sustainable mountain development, science for sustainable development, and national mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building.

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In a statement to the meeting, Preparatory Committee Chairman Tommy Koh of Singapore said the success of the Rio Conference would be called into question if it had before it large numbers of bracketed texts, and it would be lamentable to have future generations look back on the failure of the Conference due to ideological differences and the dominance of short-term interests over long-term goals. He said that contrary to rumours, the current session would not be extended beyond 3 April, and there would be no resumed session.

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Acknowledging the Secretary-General's observation that the situation in Somalia was "extraordinarily complex" and "eludes conventional solutions", Somali Chargé d'affaires Fatun Mohamed Hassan has proposed ways to ensure the effectiveness of the United Nations programme of assistance aimed at bringing the protracted crisis in that country.

In a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 26 March, Ms. Hassan stressed that the cease-fire, humanitarian assistance and national reconciliation should be weighted equally in any effort to end the Somali crisis. She also pointed to the fragility of the cease-fire agreed on by the parties on 3 March, arguing that while it was still the "logical first step in bringing an end to the senseless loss of life in Somalia", it would be "short-lived" unless the cause of the conflict was removed.

The Somali Chargé urged the international community to recognize "the multitude of factions and clans" in her country, to ensure both fairness of representation and impartiality in all negotiating efforts to reunite Somalia. She also proposed that the technical team dispatched by the Secretary-General to Mogadiscio, under the terms of Security Council resolution 746 (1992), should not only visit that city, but several other Somali ports as well, in order to ensure the equitable distribution of humanitarian assistance to all the affected population nationwide. (23763)

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Freedom of information and the importance of a free, pluralistic and independent press was stressed this morning, as the Committee on Information began its general exchange of views. During its three-week session, which began yesterday, participants will consider United Nations public information policies and activities, as well as ongoing efforts to promote a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order.

During today's debate, speakers called for a reassessment of United Nations information centres around the world. Requests to set up new centres should not be addressed on an ad hoc basis it was felt; rather, decisions should be based on clear policy guidelines.

Speaking for the Group of Western European and other States, the representative of Ireland, Gerard Corr, said the Department of Public

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Information (DPI) should make maximum use of existing resources, which he said were sufficient. The Committee needed to consolidate its role as the body that recommends to the General Assembly the mandated activities of DPI. It was undesirable for sponsors of resolutions in the Assembly to mandate activities for DPI.

The representative of Finland, Lars Backstrom, on behalf of the five Nordic countries, stressed the relationship between communications and development and called for increased coordination between DPI and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

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